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SITE: GE Cone
BREAK: 17.8
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Coosa

Department of Natural Resources

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Joe D. Tanner, Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), announced that the Natural Resources Board, meeting in special session today, closed the Coosa River to commercial fishing from Rome to the Georgia-Alabama line. Included in the ban are all streams flowing into the Coosa from the confluence of the Etowah and Oostanaula Rivers to the state line, and that portion of Lake Weiss located in Georgia.

DNR has found that fish taken from the Coosa are likely to contain levels of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB's) above the tolerance established by the U. S. Food and Drug Administration of 5 parts per million.

DNR further encourages sport fishermen and other not to eat fish taken from the Georgia stretch of the Coosa.

The Natural Resources Board also authorized the Commissioner to take action immediately if PCB levels are found to exceed FDA limits in any streams in the Coosa River basin.

Tommy Irwin, Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Agriculture has promised the full cooperation of his department in the ban on commercial fish taken from the Coosa. He asks the public to let his office know about any possible sale or attempted sale of fish from the

river. In its regulatory function, the Agriculture Department is empowered by law to prosecute any commercial sale of contaminated fish.

Leonard Ledbetter, director of DNR's Environmental Protection Division, said his division in cooperation with the Game and Fish Division is monitoring every major stream and impoundment in Georgia for PCB's. However, he said there is no reason to suspect at this time that results from other areas will be in the range of those found in the Coosa.

Leon Kirkland, Chief of Fisheries of DNR's Game and Fish Division, said present studies show that PCB levels are running higher in channel catfish than in other species found in the Coosa, but he also warns that any fish taken from the river should not be eaten until further notice.

More than 500 warning signs will be posted in the Coosa area by conservation rangers of DNR's Game and Fish Division. Rangers will also personally warn sport fishermen and the public about the situation.

The known source of the PCB's in the Coosa is the General Electric plant at Rome, Georgia. Plant officials are making efforts to minimize losses or spills into the environment. Earlier this year, the state EPD and the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency required additional changes at the plant to further minimize releases of PCB's.

PCB's are a group of organic compounds used primarily in the manufacturing of electronic capacitors and transformers. They are toxic to aquatic life, are biologically accumulative, and persist in the environment for a long time.

Commissioner Tanner stresses that the public will be informed immediately about any new developments as soon as they are discovered by DNR's investigative and study teams.



The Federal Food and Drug Administration has established a recommended limit of 5 parts per million of PCB's for fish and shellfish. Results from the State's Environmental Protection Division's laboratory showed the following:

<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>FISH</u>	<u>PCB - Parts Per Million</u>
Coosa River - Mayo's Bar downstream of Rome	Channel Catfish	5.9
	Channel Catfish	27.0
	Channel Catfish	127.0
	Channel Catfish	22.0
	Largemouth Bass	5.7
	Largemouth Bass	2.1
	Gizzard Shad	16.0
	Gizzard Shad	115.0
	Redear Sunfish	4.5
	Redear Sunfish	11.0
Coosa River - Georgia - Alabama State Line	Largemouth Bass	54.0
	Largemouth Bass	7.8
	Largemouth Bass	18.0
	Largemouth Bass	3.3
	Bluegill	18.0
	Redear Sunfish	2.5
	Black Crappie	3.5
	Brown Bullhead	4.1